

(Mr. Chairman/Madam Chairman) and members of the Committee

My name is Patricia Natusch, past president of the Coventry Historical Society in Coventry, CT. I am here to give testimony in support of S.B. No 1196 (Raised) AN ACT CONCERNING THE CONVEYANCE OF CERTAIN PARCELS OF STATE LAND - Section 9 - the removal of deed restrictions from property owned by the Coventry Historical Society at 2187 South Street, Coventry, Connecticut.

The Coventry Historical Society has owned this property since 1965. It was purchased from the State of Connecticut with the intention of using the property as a home for the society's museum and meetings. However, over the past 40 years the society has outgrown this building (known as the Sprague House) and moved its activities to its larger property the Strong Porter Museum further down South Street. The Sprague house not only became too small for society meetings, but a safety issue arose with a lack of parking and no way to build a bigger parking lot. Members were forced to park on a heavily traveled back road to attend meetings.

The Coventry Historical Society presently owns three properties - the Strong Porter House, which has the main house which houses our museum and archives, a carriage shed, a barn, and a blacksmith shop and an antique three-hole outhouse; the Sprague House, and the one-room Brick School House.

Both the Strong Porter House and the Sprague house are located within sight of the Nathan Hale Homestead, an area of historic value to the Town of Coventry.

Society members are constantly fundraising so that all these properties can be properly maintained. Matching Grants and donations have just kept us above water. With the removal of the deed restrictions the society would have the opportunity to sell the Sprague House. The society would better able to maintain its properties and save the Sprague House. As with all our properties, constant maintenance has kept our buildings in good shape and as much as it would be a blow to lose the Sprague House, we feel the only way to save this historic home built sometime between 1790 and 1820 would be to sell it to someone who would restore it, and certain caveats would be placed on the sale of the home with this intent in mind. The money used from the sale would go toward the upkeep of our other properties, future growth of our historic programs and displays of town history.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak.

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